



A Guide to the National Strategy to Accelerate Action for Children

For children and teenagers

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul
than the way in which it treats its children.”

– **President Nelson Mandela, 8 May 1995**



social development

Department:
Social Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Let's imagine something better

Imagine this: every baby born today, and tomorrow and the next day and the next, had enough love, enough food, enough safety, and brain power. Enough support to become their best self! Imagine if every child and teenager had what they needed to be happy, healthy and hopeful about the future. South Africa would be a completely different place. **Safer. Fairer. Stronger.** Together, we'd change our future!

But the truth is, we're not there yet. Too many children and teens still go to bed hungry, and too many feel unsafe at home, school, or in our communities. Our Constitution says that young people must be put first in all decisions that affect them, but that has not always happened.

That's where this guide - and the Strategy it talks about - comes in.

It's called the **National Strategy to Accelerate Action for Children**, or **NSAAC**. It's a **BIG** commitment from the South African government to make **children** and **teenagers** a **top priority**.

This guide is here to break it down for you, so you understand what's going on and how you fit into all of this.

Because yes, you do fit in. This is about you. And it needs your voice.



What's this strategy really about?

The NSAAC is a Strategy, approved by the South African Cabinet, to speed up progress for children and teenagers. It looks at what life is like for young people today, what needs to change, and how government, communities and organisations can work together to make things better.

This Strategy includes:

- ✱ how to **improve** health, wellbeing, nutrition and education,
- ✱ how to **protect** children from abuse and harm,
- ✱ how to **support** teenagers as they grow and make decisions, and
- ✱ how to **include** young people in choices and decisions that affect their lives.

It's about making your voice count, because too often, children and teens are spoken about, but not spoken with.

It also describes:

- ✱ the President and government's commitment to **speed up progress**,
- ✱ the state of **services** now, points out what needs to be **improved**, as well as **new interventions** to make things move faster,
- ✱ the **Top Ten Priorities** that would make the most difference, and
- ✱ how government can **work better together** with all of society.

What should we call you?

Let's get this out of the way, the word "child" doesn't always sit well when you're a teenager. Legally, anyone under 18 is considered a child. But we know it's more complicated than that. Maybe you see yourself as a child, a tween, a teen, or just a young person trying to figure things out.

The Strategy uses the word "adolescent" and this guide will use words like "teenager", "young person" or "you", but know that no label can sum up everything you are. You're growing, learning, and changing. And that's the whole point of this Strategy: to make sure you're supported through all of it.



“Hold My Hand” - a message for adults

There's a powerful idea at the heart of this Strategy: **Hold My Hand**. It's a message from children and teens for grown-ups: parents, teachers, community leaders, politicians, to stop telling young people what's best for them, and to start walking alongside them. It says:

“Hold my hand. I'll show you
what I need. Walk with me, not
in front of me.”

Because we can't build a strong country without strong children and teens. We can't have strong children and teens without love, food, safety, education, and the chance to dream.

These things are not luxuries, they're your **rights**.

What are your rights?

The South African Constitution has something called the Bill of Rights, and it protects everyone living in this country. But there's a special section (Section 28) just for children.

Every person under 18 has the right to:

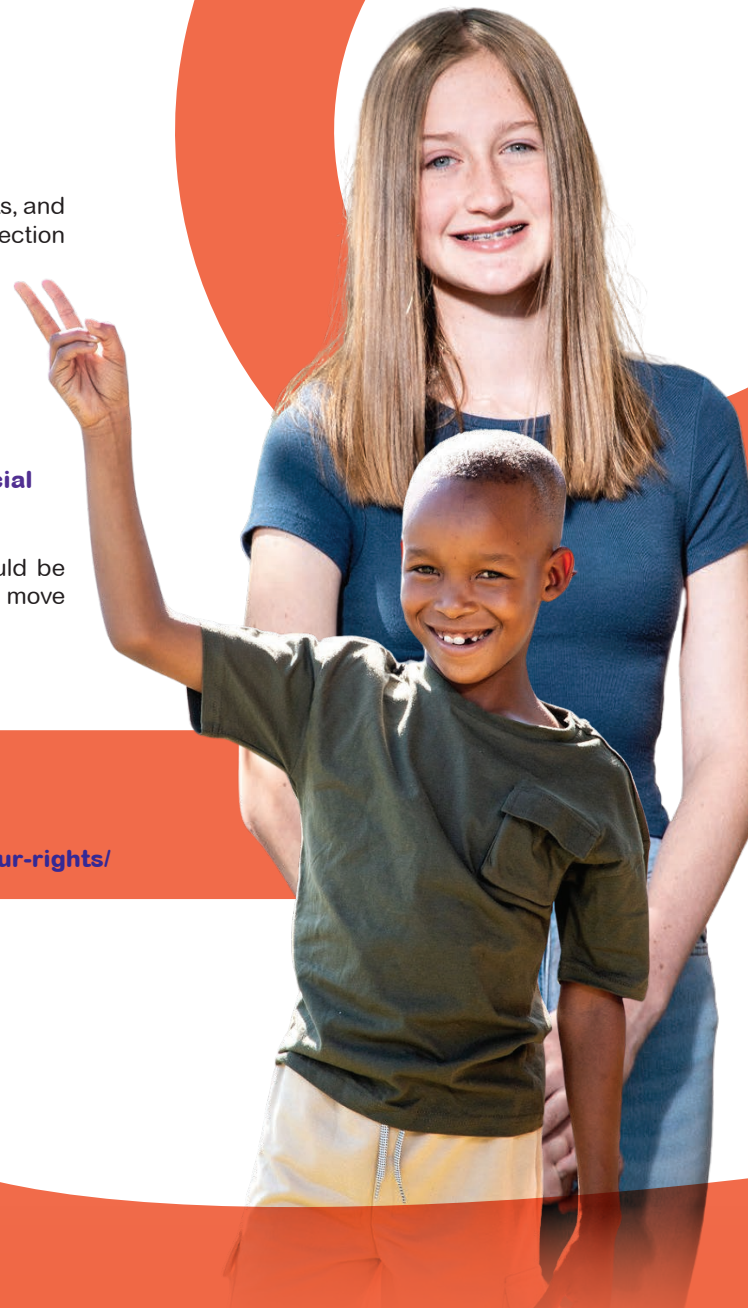
- * **a name and family,**
- * **healthy food and a safe place to live,**
- * **care when you're sick,**
- * **protection from harm or abuse,**
- * **and support when life gets tough, like help from a social worker or a lawyer if needed.**

You also have all the same rights as adults. That means you should be treated equally, allowed to say what you think, have privacy, and move freely, as long as those rights do not harm others.

If your rights are ignored, it's not just unfair. It's against the law.

Childline has more about your rights,
and they've made it super simple.

<https://www.childlinesa.org.za/children/for-children/know-your-rights/>



Let's talk about your life

You're not just one of millions. You're one person, with your own story, worries and dreams. So, take a moment and ask yourself:

- * **Do I feel safe where I live?**
- * **Do I have enough to eat each day?**
- * **Can I talk to someone I trust when I need help?**
- * **Do I feel supported at home, at school, in my community?**
- * **Do I believe my future could be better than today?**

If your answers made you feel unsure, you're not alone.

Many young people in South Africa feel the same. That's exactly why this Strategy exists.

Where do you find yourself?

This short exercise is for you. It's a chance to think about your own life and how you're doing. It might not be easy to answer every question, but being honest with yourself is the first step toward making things better.

Rate yourself: 0, 1 or 2

(0 = Not at all. 1 = Yes, somewhat. 2 = Yes, definitely)

- ✓ Do you feel like you have control over your life and can bounce back easily?
- ✓ Do you feel well-connected to family and friends?
- ✓ Can you talk to your parents or those who care for you about what is going on in your life?
- ✓ Do you feel like you're making a positive difference in other people's lives?
- ✓ Do you feel safe?
- ✓ Do you feel supported? (by your family, friends and school)
- ✓ Is school a happy and supportive place for you?
- ✓ If you are out of school, do you feel like you have other opportunities?
- ✓ Do you have enough food to eat every day that helps you grow strong?
- ✓ Do you feel like you are healthy?

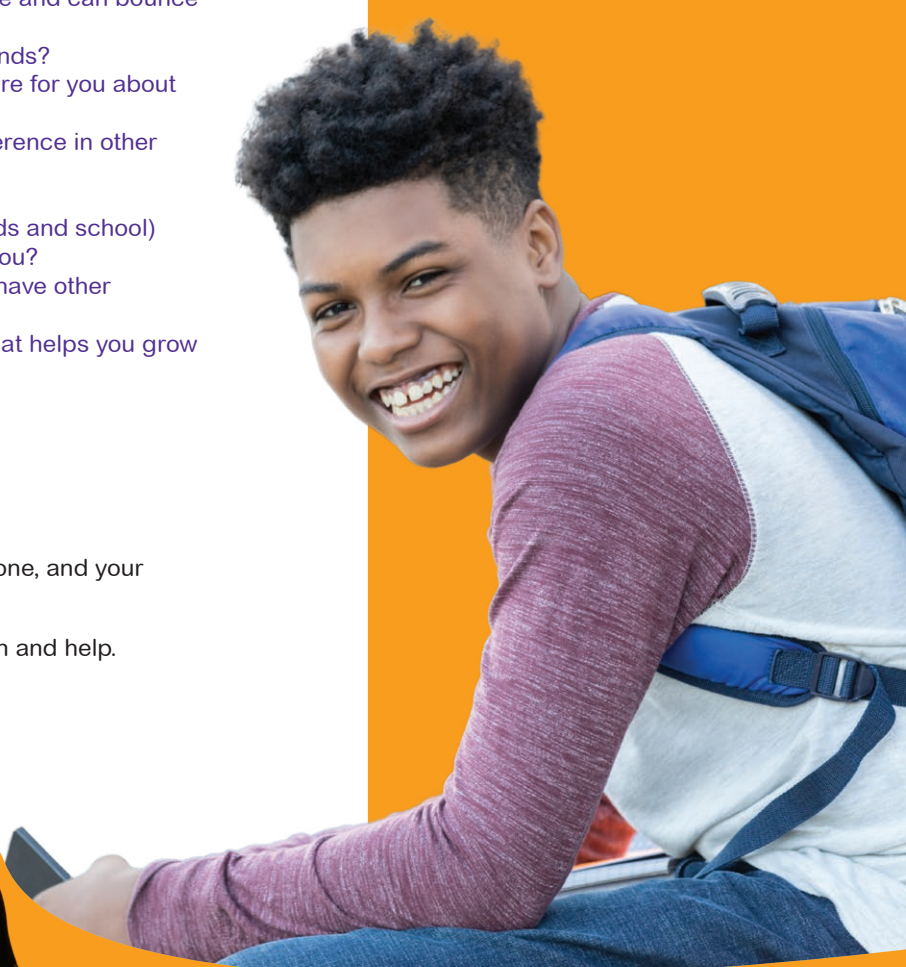
What's your score out of 20?

Whatever your score, remember this: you are not alone, and your feelings matter.

If you need support, there are people ready to listen and help.

Need someone to talk to?

Call Childline 116 (free)
or WhatsApp Keready
060 019 0000



What could the future look like?

Right now, South Africa is standing at a crossroads. Things could go in three different directions, and what happens depends on the choices made today.

Option 1: Things get worse

Child poverty rises. More children and teens go hungry or get hurt. Violence, illness and joblessness increase.

Option 2: Things improve, but slowly

Some progress happens, but it is too slow. It does not change life in a big way for most children and teens.

Option 3: We speed up progress

The government makes better choices. Services improve. Communities get support. Children and teens thrive. This is the future we are working towards.

How do we get there?

NSAAC focuses on two types of action:

- * **Key strategies** – things we need to keep improving
- * **Catalytic strategies** – powerful actions that could create big change, quickly

A catalyst is like a spark, it helps something happen faster. We need more sparks to light the way forward.

Click here for more information - Key Strategies to Accelerate Child and Adolescent Wellbeing



The Top Ten Priorities to Accelerate Action

- 1 Strengthen families and enable parents & caregivers to care for their children.
- 2 Reduce infant and child deaths.
- 3 Eliminate HIV transmission to babies.
- 4 Improve child nutrition.
- 5 Grow children's brain power through early learning and language development.
- 6 Prevent disability in children and give those with disabilities the same opportunities as others.
- 7 Protect children & teens from all forms of abuse, violence, injuries and harmful substances.
- 8 Give teens good access to health care, including sexual & reproductive health.
- 9 Increase participation in quality education and training and link school-leavers to work.
- 10 Build teenagers' sense of identity, agency and connectedness.

The big challenge is turning these priorities into real action. The NSAAC highlights ten powerful interventions that could have the greatest impact over the next decade. They are not the only steps we need to take, but they are the ones most likely to spark real change and open the door to new progress.

The Ten Interventions that will make the most difference by 2035

- 1 Restore the Child Support Grant to the Food Poverty Line.
- 2 Provide a matching subsidy for a basket of protein-rich food staples, discounted through industry collaboration.
- 3 Ensure the Nutrition Therapeutic Programme (NTP) is adequately funded and implemented in all provinces.
- 4 Strengthen childcare and protection systems.
- 5 Drive a responsive care campaign, including early language development and cognitive stimulation (<3 yrs).
- 6 Ensure access for every child (3-5 yrs) to a quality early learning programme.
- 7 Ensure universal neonatal hearing screening and visual screening for Gr R learners.
- 8 Ban alcohol advertising (except at point of sale), introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol and restrict on-site liquor hours to midnight.
- 9 Expand prevention and early intervention basket of services including sexual & reproductive health services for teenagers, including community-based supply of contraceptives.
- 10 Build a national network of support promoting a sense of meaningful participation, agency and identity among teenagers.



What do the interventions mean?

The interventions are bold steps to make real improvements. Here's what they are about – in simple terms, so they are easier to understand.

1. Raise the Child Support Grant:

Families need enough money to buy real food, not just pap and sugar. The grant must match the cost of feeding a child.

2. Lower the price of protein-rich foods:

Healthy food, that helps make your body and brain grow - like eggs, beans and milk - should be cheaper for everyone.

3. Fix the Nutrition Programme:

Children who are not growing properly need special food from clinics. This must work better in every province.

4. Improve child protection:

More support is needed from social workers, police and the courts to stop abuse and keep children safe.

5. Support babies from day one:

Adults need to play, talk and read with babies. This helps brains grow and prepares them for learning.

6. Preschool for all:

Every child aged 3 to 5 should get quality early learning, not just those who can afford it.

7. Hearing and vision checks:

Every baby and Grade R child should have their hearing and sight tested early.

8. Reduce harm from alcohol:

Stop adverts, raise prices, and limit how late alcohol can be sold. This helps reduce violence and accidents.

9. Make health services teen-friendly:

Clinics should be safe places where teenagers can ask questions and get protection and contraceptives without shame.

10. Help teens feel strong and connected:

Young people need to be seen, supported, and included, especially when life gets tough.

Click on each intervention for more stats and facts.



Working Together

Big change needs everyone to play their part.

- * **Government** must protect children's rights by funding schools, clinics and social services, training staff, and making sure all decisions consider what is best for young people.
- * **Families** are where support starts. They can show love, keep children safe, help them learn, and ask for help when they need it, especially during hard times.
- * **Businesses** can lower food prices, remove harmful advertising, offer job opportunities and support projects that help children and teens live better lives.
- * **NGOs** work closely with communities to offer support, fill service gaps, and speak up for policies that put children first.
- * **Schools** must be safe and welcoming. Teachers can support learning, encourage life skills and listen when learners speak up.
- * **Young people** can speak out, support each other, share ideas, and help hold adults accountable. Your voice matters, and your future depends on it.

The more we work together, the faster we can build a better country.

What is the Hold My Hand Accelerator?

The Hold My Hand Accelerator for Children and Teens is a small team helping to turn the NSAAC Strategy into real action. It works closely with government and other partners to run a national campaign, share useful information, fix gaps in services, and connect people and organisations so that everyone is working together to support children and teenagers. It focuses on five things:

1. Making sure children eat enough healthy food to grow well
2. Helping babies learn early
3. Reducing alcohol harm
4. Testing hearing and vision early
5. Supporting teens to build identity, confidence and get connected

You might not see it, but it is working behind the scenes to make life better.

Your voice matters

This plan will only work if young people are involved. Speak up at school. Ask questions in your community. Share what you learn. You have the right to be part of the solution.



So, what now?

The Strategy is not just words on paper. It drives an action plan, and your future is part of it.

Here is what you can do:

- * **Ask your school or community leaders what they are doing to support children and teens**
- * **Show this guide to others**
- * **Share posts from www.holdmyhand.org.za and [@holdmyhandsa](https://www.instagram.com/holdmyhandsa)**
- * **Talk about your rights and help others understand theirs and their responsibilities**



**Hou my hand vas
Bamba umkhonwami
Bamba isandla sam
Bamba isandla sami
Nsware ka letsogo
Ntshware ka letsoho
Ntshware ka letsogo
Ngicela ungibambe tandla
Farani tshanda tshanga
Khoma voko raminga**





Together, we will
Change our future

contact us



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